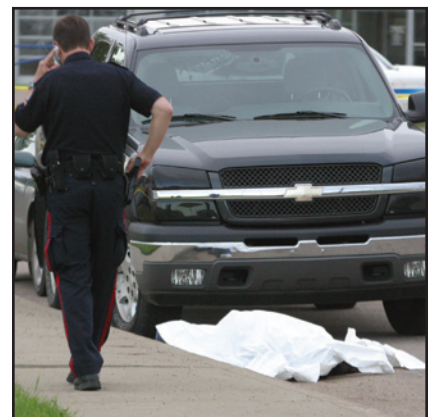




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Beyond Survival



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FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin

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Beyond Survival

Beyond survival. What does that mean? Unthinkable and horrific events have occurred in recent years that have affected this country's first responders in ways previous disasters, whether natural or man-made, cannot compare. September 11, 2001, ushered in the age of terrorism from abroad that shocked Americans by its vicious intensity. April 16, 2007, brought the specter of death looming across the serene setting of a university campus that destroyed the last vestiges of innocence in its wake. The valiant law enforcement officers, firefighters, and emergency services personnel who responded absorbed greater amounts of physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual trauma than ever should be inflicted upon anyone.

All courageous guardians of peace and justice who willingly place themselves in harm's way in these types of events and, indeed, in everyday duties, such as separating mangled bodies at the scene of traffic fatalities or facing ruthless criminals with murderous intentions, must not just survive such devastating exposures but fully recover and return to their professional and family responsibilities as whole, healthy individuals. Merely surviving is not enough. It is not enough for them and not enough for this country, whose security rests upon their shoulders. If its first responders are not healthy in mind, body, and spirit, America cannot endure the onslaughts of today's world and remain a vibrant nation.

To discuss these vital concerns, an eclectic assembly of law enforcement professionals, academics, and members of the clergy came

together under the auspices of the FBI Academy's Behavioral Science Unit for the first annual Beyond Survival: Wellness Practices for Wounded Warriors conference. During a week of intense and stimulating debate, the group wrestled with many weighty matters. This focus issue contains articles from five of the members that offer a wide range of ideas. These articles represent a significant departure from the normal fare presented in the *FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin* and may come as a surprise. However, if approached in the same vein of open-mindedness as this issue is offered, readers should find the contents enlightening.

All of the articles contain one unifying message: first responders must be allowed to do more than just survive their chosen profession. This focus issue of the *FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin* stands as an initial effort to draw attention to this crucial matter, and future editions will continue to explore ways of helping first responders fulfill their duties while remaining strong and vital human beings. In addition, the Behavioral Science Unit at the FBI Academy has begun the Beyond Survival Toward Officer Wellness (BeSTOW) initiative to educate law enforcement executives who attend the FBI National Academy about how to protect themselves and the officers they lead from the toxic effects of their profession. The dedicated men and women who willingly place their lives in jeopardy every day deserve such attention to their plight because without their selfless commitment, the United States will not remain a secure and free nation. ♦

Wellness and Spirituality Beyond Survival Practices for Wounded Warriors

By SAMUEL L. FEEMSTER, M.Div., J.D.



"Too long a sacrifice can make a stone of the heart."

—William Butler Yeats

Policing can become lethal and toxic for unprepared law enforcement officers dedicated to protecting and serving their communities. Empirical data have suggested that exposure to crime can harm the brain, as well as relationships that matter most to officers. Thus, to combat the diabolical schemes and toxic complexities of criminal evil (e.g., violence, terrorism, and gangs) during the 21st century, officers must constantly revitalize and

safeguard their inner spirituality. In law enforcement, spirituality is about proactively nurturing the souls and performance of all officers. Along with the best wellness practices that support physical abilities, spirituality focuses on the inward forces that sustain the external instruction officers receive at police academies, during on-the-job probationary periods, and while attending in-service courses throughout their vocational lives. In the same vein,

recent studies have indicated that tactical and legal training are not sufficient for preparing law enforcement officers when their spirituality is neglected or wounded.²

Yet, when some officers hear the term *spirituality*, they unfortunately dismiss it in superficial ways. Spirituality in policing is not about adopting religious dogmas or creeds unless officers choose to embrace these worldviews. Moreover, glib or authoritarian approaches to religious indoctrination can actually kill or suppress authentic spirituality.

These concerns emerged as leaders from the law enforcement, academic, and faith communities throughout the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom met for the first annual Beyond Survival: Wellness Practices for Wounded Warriors conference in June 2008. Representatives came from California, Texas, New Mexico, New York, Minnesota, and other jurisdictions. Members from the U.S. military, the Army National Guard, and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police also participated. Sponsored by the Behavioral Science Unit at the FBI Academy, the conference brought these individuals together to analyze how spirituality enhances law enforcement practice. Participants delivered more than 27 detailed

presentations about the impact of spirituality in law enforcement. The culmination of the conference occurred as attendees tackled a set of pertinent questions.

- Are spirituality and religion the same?
- Where is the intersection between the police and the faith community?
- What is a wellness curriculum for policing, as well as for the faith community?
- What other issues and questions should be addressed in seeking wellness?

CONFERENCE FINDINGS

Collectively, attendees concluded that spirituality in law enforcement constitutes a vital key to wellness practices for wounded warriors. Law

enforcement officers everywhere are wounded and in need of protection from intentional, repeated, long-term exposures to evil and its toxins. Although armed and vigilant for the protection of the innocent and defenseless, as well as their fellow officers and themselves, these brave guardians sustain wounds through the persistent assault of human predators.

As an invisible weapon, spirituality does not weaken the best aspects of policing; rather, it greatly accentuates them. Spirituality matters to effective practice and performance in seven primary ways.

- 1) Spirituality nourishes the inner being of officers, inoculating, protecting, and refreshing them from dangerous levels of multiple stressors.

“

...spirituality does not weaken the best aspects of policing; rather, it greatly accentuates them.

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Special Agent Feemster serves in the Behavioral Science Unit at the FBI Academy.

2) Spirituality unleashes vitality by reengaging officers in the spirit of the law.

3) Spirituality heals the deepest, most invisible trauma of wounded warriors.

4) Spirituality provides an antidote for the toxicity of

evil, thereby promoting wellness beyond survival.

5) Spirituality nurtures longevity in law enforcement.

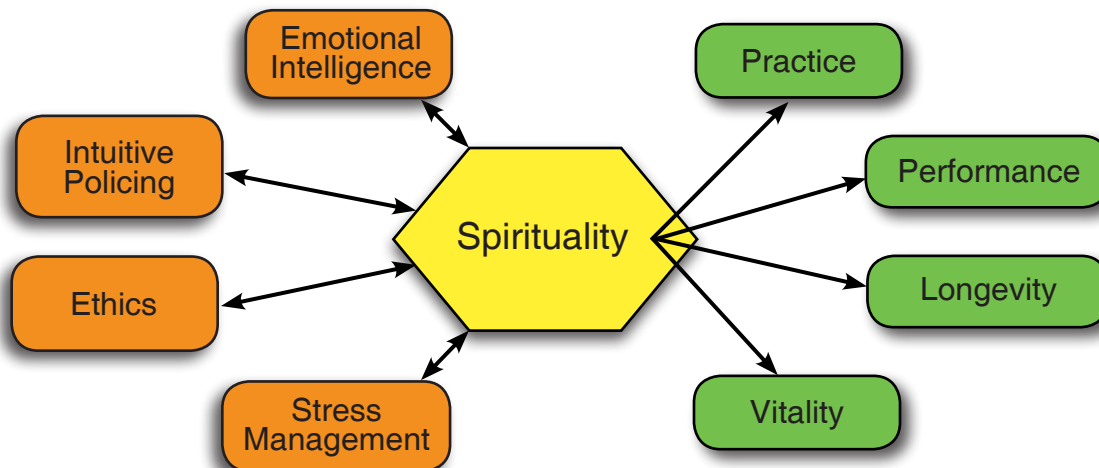
6) Spirituality enhances intuitive policing, emotional intelligence, and stress management.

7) Spirituality, according to new evidence, strengthens brain functions.

Distinguishing Spirituality and Religion

Recognizing that spirituality is not necessarily related to religion constitutes one of the

Spirituality in Law Enforcement Practice Model



Spirituality is the human dimension that shapes law enforcement practice, performance, vitality, and longevity. This model connects spirituality with these four areas. Moving from left to right, the model posits that spirituality is the source of effectiveness for stress management, ethics, emotional intelligence, and intuitive policing. In short, it amplifies them and they, in turn, feed back into spirituality in a healthy officer. On the right side, spirituality affects the vitality, longevity, performance, and practice of law enforcement by enabling officers to recharge themselves in the spirit of the law throughout their period of vocational active duty. A nurtured spirituality improves practice, performance, vitality, and longevity, which all feed back into spirituality to improve emotional intelligence, intuition, ethics, and stress management.

Source: Samuel L. Feemster, "Spirituality: An Invisible Weapon for Wounded Warriors," *FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin*, January 2009, 1-12.

supreme findings from the vast majority of conference participants. While acknowledging an officer's constitutional right to have a specific religious affiliation if desired, conferees maintained that spirituality and religion are distinct phenomena. Religion is more involved and organized institutionally, whereas spirituality incorporates the entire being by connecting the inner person with that individual's approach to life. As human software, spirituality encompasses everyone. It involves a person's values and ideals, emphasizing the human spirit. Moreover, spirituality can actively embrace and include the tangible pursuits of those who find it within the confines of organized religion. One group of conference attendees noted, "All religion is spiritual, but spirituality is not necessarily religious." They asserted that some dogmatic religious people do not always understand this distinction. Hence, religion is a human attempt to control spirituality with sectarian rules, regulations, policies, and rituals.

Spirituality is linked to a full concept or interpretation of wellness. That same group of conferees concluded, "We do not find any examples of someone who is emotionally unwell and spiritually, as well as physically, healthy. Conversely, there are many examples of people who are spiritually

and emotionally healthy with a matching level of physical health." They advocated a hierarchy of wellness, from the spiritual realm to the emotional and physical domains. Here, spirituality is rooted in a belief in something or someone greater than yourself that relieves stress and does away with a toxic self-centeredness. Spirituality allows officers to unburden themselves by nurturing a

“Recognizing that spirituality is not necessarily related to religion constitutes one of the supreme findings from the vast majority of conference participants.”

deeper, collective consciousness with colleagues and trusted others. While clergy and community leaders can occupy parallel, intersecting support roles, law enforcement officers always must take the lead in nourishing their own spirituality. After all, the practice of policing is inherently spiritual by enforcing laws, maintaining order, serving others, and upholding peace.

Another group of conference participants targeted the

use of force, racial profiling, prison abuse, citizen complaints, and preventative strategies for spiritual examination by law enforcement personnel. Addressing these sensitive matters with best practices clearly represents a law enforcement initiative.

Connecting Police, Spirituality, and Faith Communities

Spirituality is akin to a software upgrade for the invisible, internalized competencies instrumental to effective law enforcement practice. Emphasizing spirituality predisposes a cultural shift—for many officers, a paradigm change—in how law enforcement does its job. Conference attendees insisted that top law enforcement leaders must accept the concept of spirituality to reduce burnout, destructive behaviors, absenteeism, and police suicides. Here, “good cops” must press the profession well beyond the tipping point of old paradigms to new levels of integral spirituality. Sworn personnel must see that spirituality can revitalize the recruitment process, especially for the next generation of officers. Trainers can integrate spirituality into existing curricula, while clergy can nurture it in their interactions within communities. Networks in the United Kingdom and Canada can focus on management training, along

with agencies in the United States. Different levels of training are needed for police chiefs and agency heads, mid-level supervisors, and rank-and-file officers, as well as new recruits. Spirituality brings a holistic emphasis—beyond stress management or suicide prevention—to the intact paramilitary structures endemic to law enforcement regimes worldwide.

In brief, conferees agreed that officers must cultivate their own spirituality, individually and collectively. Law enforcement agencies must nourish spirituality via training, curriculum, policies, and recruitment. Clergy and community leaders must ask officers how they can help. Residents must support these efforts. Governmental leaders must recognize that nurturing spirituality among law enforcement officers is in the nation's best interest. Media should aid citizens in understanding the role and complications of law enforcement. Of course, educators, especially in the aftermath of such tragedies as Columbine and Virginia Tech, often support the efforts of peace officers on schools and campuses.³

Developing a Wellness Curriculum

In policing, vision nurtures spirituality. Consequently, leaders must foster the core beliefs and values of the law

enforcement community via clearly stated agency principles. Members must buy into a revitalized spirituality in the profession. Conference participants wanted a curriculum at the level of the FBI's National Academy⁴ with effective safeguards or incentives that guaranteed balance in the training and practice of spirituality.

“

Spirituality is akin to a software upgrade for the invisible, internalized competencies instrumental to effective law enforcement practice.

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For example, they did not favor any departmental policy that placed too much emphasis on Christian spirituality to the detriment of other expressions. On the other hand, no one wanted a Pandora's box of confused, divisive spirituality within the profession. Agencies must give organizational space to spirituality without projecting an atmosphere of hostility or indifference. Meanwhile, those who embrace their spirituality in the workplace never must allow it to become associated

with mediocrity in any aspect of law enforcement practice. The ultimate intention of spirituality is to ensure wellness for wounded warriors. Spirituality is not advocating religion or faith-based interventions. It aims to reduce turnover, improve the quality of service delivery, encourage healthier organizations, and curtail internal hazards to vitality and longevity.

Conferees remained adamant about identifying healthy versus dysfunctional models of spirituality. They wanted videos of officers sharing their genuine spiritual experiences. They felt strongly that stories matter because they can bring wellness to officers and their communities. Such personal accounts make officers feel positive about serving others by highlighting their moral authority within their jurisdictions. Given these antecedents, conference participants suggested some subjects for inclusion in a curriculum focused on spirituality in law enforcement.

- Violence and Its Effects Upon Police Officers
- Looking Forward from Within (exploring the meaning of spirituality)
- Police Training for the Whole Person: Body, Mind, Soul, and Spirit
- Policing with the Whole Officer (respecting communities)

Table 1. SOP Themes Under Development

Themes	Curriculum Implications and Practices		
	For Law Enforcement	For Local Clergy	For Communities
Spiritually Optimized Practices	Develop enabling mission and vision statements that promote best practices	Develop worship, teaching, and ministries targeting officers as spiritual civil authorities	Develop and invest in community security through citizen police academies
Standard Operating Procedures	Embody the transformative spirit of the law through tangible action steps	Create, establish, and maintain places of refuge for officers through inclusive community embrace	Transform negative community perceptions through practical positive engagement
Souls on Patrol	Equip officers with invisible weapons to combat toxic exposure to evil	Discuss “calling” in connection with spirituality and public service	Cultivate positive contacts and celebrations to reduce fear
Save Our Police	Address and reduce maladaptive behaviors with community collaboration	Establish nontraditional, law enforcement-friendly networks for empowerment	Listen and constructively engage officer concerns as part of the community agenda
Serving Our People	Nurture vitality through positive networks	Reduce and help manage the impact of toxic exposures on the human spirit	Advocate mutual trust and synergy through reciprocal support
Spirituality-Oriented Policing	Practice Robert Peel’s Principles with critical spirituality	Address chronic exposure to toxicity through connectivity	Enhance community security through meeting officer needs

Source: Beyond Survival: Wellness Practices for Wounded Warriors conference in June 2008, and Spirituality, Wellness, and Vitality Issues in Law Enforcement Practices course (CJ366), FBI National Academy Session 236, Samuel L. Feemster, Facilitator. The creative development and implementation of SOPs is the desired end of Spirituality Adapted for Law Enforcement Training (SALT), a forthcoming component of CJ366.

- Navigating with Your Own Moral Compass
- Policing and Your Brain: Scientific Findings
- 21st Century Paradigm Shifts in Policing
- Is There Spirituality in Criminology? How to Get There
- Bibliography on Spirituality in Law Enforcement (with associated readings)
- Spirituality in Policing or Spirituality-Oriented Policing

- Cut the BS: Bureaucracy, Leadership, and the Anaclitic-Depression Blues
- In addition, one group of conference attendees identified funding, bias, organizational resistance, and personality conflicts as salient points. Of course, these and other issues must be scrutinized thoroughly. Perhaps, other focus groups would be utilized to set priorities for law enforcement. Clergy would adapt themselves in concert with these matters. Spirituality represents a paradigm shift in health

perspectives for peace warriors. Incorporating spirituality in law enforcement and community venues will not be a perfunctory task for leaders and citizens during the 21st century. It must be an intentional effort as depicted by the matrix identified in table 1. Conferees immediately noted the law enforcement profession’s preoccupation with the acronym SOP and the role spirituality plays. They agreed that it contributes to Spiritually Optimized Practices. It affects Standard Operating Procedures. It nurtures the Souls on Patrol.

It Saves Our Police. It Serves Our People. It sanctions Spirituality-Oriented Policing. Table 1 sets forth these six SOP themes currently under development as they relate to curriculum implications and practices for law enforcement, clergy, and communities.

Planning for the Future

Conferees wondered about how spirituality might be institutionalized throughout law enforcement. They recommended a succession plan for the current facilitators and the development of mentors for the next generation of officers. These and other items, such as community support, will be tackled in a special working group of officers, agency leaders, clergy, and others.

In addition, conference participants felt that divergent interests and social spaces must be acknowledged. New, creative intersections must be forthcoming between police chaplains, clergy, community leaders, and officers that will move well beyond current ad hoc groups. As the attendees pointed out, law enforcement officers, like the citizens they protect and serve, often are members of faith communities. Clergy must meet their needs, acknowledging cultural competencies. Officers must inform pastors and other religious leaders about the job of policing. They must educate seminars about how clergy

might nurture the spirit of first responders via sermons, classes, lay involvement, and church policies. They must articulate distinctions between spirituality and religion. Clergy can host community forums and hold special services in honor or appreciation of law enforcement, thereby actively demonstrating that spirituality and officer wellness are connected inextricably.

“Conference participants wanted a curriculum...that guaranteed balance in the training and practice of spirituality.”

CONCLUSION

During a week in June 2008, leaders from the law enforcement, academic, and faith communities discussed the compelling issues surrounding wellness practices for wounded warriors. All agreed that merely surviving the rigors of the law enforcement profession no longer can be the goal of those called to this duty. Sworn personnel must acknowledge that the act of protecting and serving their communities is endemically spiritual. It involves a sacred trust between the guardians

and those they shield from danger. Upholding the law and maintaining order require great effort and sacrifice from those charged with these tasks. But, who protects the protectors?

Conference participants have embraced an agenda. To facilitate this effort, future initiatives entail developing a working group that will devise curriculum, define or clarify key concepts, assemble requisite bibliographies, coordinate relevant research, and market or disseminate findings to appropriate audiences. The work has begun and will continue because it is crucial to the well-being of all first responders and to the future of this nation. “Come and stand beside us, we can find a better way.”⁵ ♦

Endnotes

¹ William Butler Yeats, “Easter 1916,” in *The Variorum Edition of the Poems of W.B. Yeats*, ed. Peter Allt and Russell K. Alspach (New York, NY: MacMillan, 1957), 394.

² Samuel L. Feemster, “Spirituality: The DNA of Law Enforcement Practice,” *FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin*, November 2007, 8-17; and “Spirituality: An Invisible Weapon for Wounded Warriors,” *FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin*, January 2009, 1-12.

³ For additional information, see Peter Finn, “School Resource Officer Programs,” *FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin*, August 2006, 1-7.

⁴ The FBI hosts four 10-week sessions each year during which law enforcement executives from around the world come together to attend classes in various criminal justice subjects.

⁵ John Denver, “Rhymes and Reasons,” *John Denver’s Greatest Hits*, RCA PCD1-0374.

A Brief Introduction to the Language of Spirit and Law Enforcement

By Jeffrey G. Willetts, Ph.D.



The Pentagon.

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For most of my life, my only association with law enforcement has occurred on the interstate highway system. Although I have served as a pastor for many years and as an academic dean at a theological seminary for a few more, I never really have known any law enforcement officers or understood much about the nature of their work. All of that changed, however, on September 11, 2001.

On that day, I sat in a friend's home not far from the seminary watching the horrors unfold on television. I live and work within a few miles of Washington, D.C., and, as events would have it, the images on television would not be confined to that medium. As we watched the tragedies unfold, wonder, astonishment, fear, and anger crept up on us as we held our collective breath. Shocked by proximity, audacity, and the sheer magnitude of events, the images, at first, appeared surreal, like a well-made television drama that had caught us all off guard.

An Unseen Force

As the aftershock of those hours and then days began to permeate the psyche of our local community, clergy of all denominational affiliations started pondering what appropriate words and

deeds they should offer in terms of a legitimate and helpful response. Immediate attention turned to the families of those either lost or injured in the attacks and how best to minister to them. As the days and weeks went by, our community mourned, held memorial services, and ministered to the heartbroken families of the victims. What went decidedly and tragically unnoticed, however, was any acknowledgment of the effects of these events on the lives of those whose calling it is to serve and protect:

Dr. Willetts is the academic dean of the John Leland Center for Theological Studies in Arlington, Virginia.



the first responders. No clergy, as I can recall, even mentioned the potential devastation on those involved in the rescue efforts at the Pentagon.

Within a few months of that tragic day, however, these matters drew much closer to home. A dedicated student at the seminary started missing class. His pastor informed me that the young man, a police officer, was one of the first on the scene at the Pentagon. He also related images the officer had shared with him, those of burning flesh, dead bodies, and screaming and hysterical victims. Not only was this officer struggling with school but his marriage was in trouble, he was leaving his police department, and he had suicidal thoughts.

How did we fail to see this? While energetically teaching those charged with the spiritual care of others, we overlooked the spiritual devastation of one of our own within our very midst. It is not that we missed something we knew and understood. No, we did not recognize its reality and force altogether.

One reason stems from what blinds many people to the effects of policing on officers. *We do not have to deal with it.* That is, the public in general is largely unfamiliar with the horror and heartbreak that officers see every day. These dedicated guardians form a blue wall of separation from the corrupt and evil forces that pervade segments of society. Clergy may contend with many of these same forces from time to time, but officers must face them routinely. And, it is the constant presence of some of these forces that can prove so devastating.

A more insidious and, therefore, dangerous reason for this blindness involves the unreality with which many in law enforcement, as well as the general public, treat difficult matters relating to the profession. Others can outline the specific

ways in which these difficulties arise and manifest in the law enforcement community. My primary concern is with the apparent absence of the kinds of conceptual resources necessary to deal with the problems in this professional domain and how we in the clergy and the general population might understand them.

A Meaningful Life

I always have had questions of ultimacy, about what is fundamentally important, rewarding, and good. It probably explains why I followed a career path in philosophy and ministry. In both disciplines, people generally ask the big questions, those concerning God, truth, and happiness. My role as a theological educator and my own experience during 9/11, along with some recent research,¹ have convinced me that a place exists in the curriculum of seminaries and, I hope, in police academies to address these issues in relation to law enforcement. While those of us in seminary education seem to effectively prepare clergy

for parish ministry, we appear less able to equip them for public ministry. So, to effectively deal with the toxic effects of the policing environment on the law enforcement community, how should we proceed? To me, no serious engagement with the toxic by-products of policing on the vitality and wellness of law enforcement officers and other first responders is possible apart from a reassessment of the conceptual resources associated with the language of spirit.

What do I mean by the language of spirit? For me, the Australian philosopher Raimond Gaita ably brings out the ideological terrain that, although extremely important, is little discussed or considered. He argues that only human beings

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While energetically teaching those charged with the spiritual care of others, we overlooked the spiritual devastation of one of our own within our very midst.

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have souls, at least in the sense of a spiritual life. “An animal’s life does not have meaning because an animal cannot live its life deeply or shallowly, lucidly or opaquely, honestly or dishonestly, worthily or unworthily.”² Not for a moment is Gaita suggesting that the lives of animals are unimportant or meaningless, quite the contrary. He is pointing out that the lives of animals do not have the kind of interiority that we may attribute to human beings. And, it is precisely this interiority that constitutes a meaningful life.

Only human beings have souls, and we do not intend it as a disputable metaphysical proposition; the concept of a soul is a spiritual concept, and spiritual concepts apply only to what may have an inner life. Only human beings can reflect on what happens to them and take an attitude to what happens to them because of such reflection. An animal can suffer, but it cannot curse the day that it was born; an animal can be afraid, but it cannot be ashamed of its fear and despise itself; an animal can be happy, but it cannot be joyous; an animal cannot give of itself to certain pursuits and be admonished for doing so. The problems of life’s meaning cannot arise for an animal. Only a being for whom life can be problematic can have a spiritual life and, therefore, have a soul.³

Remorse, regret, despair, anguish, pity, joy, hope, and compassion represent the elements in what we understand as the spiritual landscape, the conceptual possibilities that have to do with human interiority. I contend that a failure to appreciate what Gaita has acknowledged—namely, that the spiritual life is constitutive of what it means to be a human being—substantially contributes to the detrimental effects of policing on law enforcement officers.

Numerous people in the United States regard themselves as religious. Many more, although not explicitly religious, consider themselves spiritual. And, by extension, this can be said of a number of law enforcement officers. In this article, I am not addressing the issue of religious faith or religious commitment. Rather, I am interested in the language of spirit and its place in meeting the challenges of vitality and wellness faced by those in law enforcement. Why have we forgotten these important facts about human beings and how they are constituted? And, most of all, what factors have led to this form of cultural and social blindness to our nature as human beings?

A Disenchanted World

The Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor wonders about the radical decline of spiritual language in the West. “Why was it virtually impossible *not* to believe in God [for example] in say, 1500 in our Western society, while in 2000, many of us find this not only easy but inescapable?”⁴

Space does not allow an exploration of how this Copernican shift away from the pervasive presence of spirituality in every aspect of life morphs into the modern world. Suffice it to say that the disenchantment of which Taylor speaks—the secularization that characterizes our understanding of life, nature, and humanity—excludes perforce the spiritual realities that once were self-evident and pervasive.

For us, the cultural markers of a spiritually infused cosmos are now more like shadows, with no obvious reality.

But, one certain contributor to this disenchanted world we now live in is the tenacious hold evidentialism has exercised on our Western imagination. Evidentialism is the idea that to be rational, all true beliefs are subject to adjudication



according to the strength of the evidence for or against. Within the modern practices of law enforcement, this cultural fact should come as no surprise. After all, is it not the point of collecting, analyzing, and evaluating evidence to ascertain the truth? What is not so widely appreciated is how evidentialism's hold on us has significantly contributed to the decline of spiritual concepts as a cultural norm.

One example is belief in God. Many people, including numerous philosophers, are inclined to assess the truth of the reality of God in evidentialist terms. They ask about the evidence for belief in God. To this requirement, both apologists and skeptics point to what they take as the putative evidence for and against God's reality (i.e., the existence of God). But, as the philosopher Gareth Moore has clearly pointed out, such assessments are not so reliable because traditional philosophers and theologians

give sentences about existence, for example, "God exists," a priority which does not belong to them.

In reality, it is rare that we say of a chair that it exists or does not exist. We buy chairs, sit on them, tell people not to put their feet on them, and so on, and we do not assure ourselves of the existence of the chairs in question before doing so. This is not to say that we are not concerned with reality. We are, but that concern comes out above all in the way we act; and we act, with certainty, without prior theoretical justification. In the same way, we (some of us) pray to God, talk to others about God, try to do the will of God, maybe fear the judgment of God, and so on. This is a concern with reality which comes out in the way we act, though the acts concerned are of course different from the acts we perform in relation to chairs. Belief that

God exists does not justify religious practice. Rather, to come to believe in God is to come to see the sense in religious practice. One does not, for instance, need to assure oneself of the existence of God before permitting oneself to give thanks; rather, it is in coming to see the sense in giving thanks that one comes to see the sense in believing in God.... The truth of "God exists" does not justify religious practice or underlie it; it is given sense and held in place by it.⁵

Here, Moore has in mind the spiritual practice of belief in God and how philosophers too often characterize such belief in evidentialist terms. But, a wider point exists in Moore's presentation that can prove instructive for us: the logical difference

between our use of words like *chair*, *table*, or *cat* and our use of the word *God* and its relation to the language of spirit.

Whereas chairs, mountains, gazelles, and so on are material things, God is a spirit. Calling God a spirit is not to say that he is made of a different kind of substance from trees and trains. It is not, as it were, to make a remark about the physics of God...about the kind of sub-

stance of which God is made; it is a logical or grammatical marker, which marks the fact that our discourse about God functions in a very different way from our discourse about those things that we call material realities.⁶

Perhaps, one way to make the kind of distinction that this discussion has suggested, thus far, is to say that God's reality is not a *physical* reality. God is a *spiritual* reality. And, it is only physical realities that are within evidentialism's purview.

A Spiritual Reality

Many spiritual realities, of which God is clearly one, exist, such as the soul, justice and injustice, good and evil, judgment and forgiveness,

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**According to Gaita,
the reality of evil
is given in human
reactions to human
circumstances.**

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remorse, guilt, despair, hope, and peace. These and many more mark the interiority that we call spirit or spirituality. While not a religious concept, it is the possibility of religion. Another spiritual reality is the idea of evil, a salient concept related to officer wellness and vitality. But, because evil is so often dismissed as an *unreality*, the exposure of law enforcement to its deleterious effects all too often is ignored.

The philosopher Raimond Gaita asks, "Does the concept of evil mark out a distinctive moral reality?"⁷ As strange as it may seem, the source of Gaita's puzzlement comes from "people [who] doubt that the concept of evil makes an interesting and distinctive contribution to our moral understanding."⁸ Gaita gives Inga Clendinnen as an example of the kind of moral skeptic he has in mind. In her book *Reading the Holocaust*, Clendinnen reveals that she "has no use for the concept of evil. With respect to evil, such skeptics are nominalists, believing that the concept of evil in so far as it refers to anything beyond itself marks only a deep moral sensibility."⁹ What then leads such moral skeptics to this conclusion? Gaita lists two. First, "there is the belief that the serious belief in evil requires metaphysical or religious support. Second, its use is often associated with the kind of moralizing we now call judgmentalism."¹⁰

Against this disenchanted worldview, Gaita offers a compelling example of the nexus within which our understanding of the reality of evil has its sense. According to Gaita, the reality of evil is given in human reactions to human circumstances. Imagine, Gaita suggests, a man who experiences profound remorse. The example concerns a man who occasionally walks by an elderly drunk who, from time to time, asks for money, and, from time to time, the man gives him money. On one occasion, the elderly drunk accosts the man who, in an ensuing struggle, knocks him into the street where

he is killed. For many years, the man simply gave money to the elderly drunk and never had another thought about him or his circumstances. But, because of what has happened now, the man feels a deep, maybe even crushing, sense of remorse over what he has done. In this, Gaita recognizes what "makes us painfully aware of the reality of evil."¹¹

Conclusion

Law enforcement officers face the reality of evil in Raimond Gaita's sense all of the time. The indirect effects are on the interior lives of officers. To ignore these realities is to ignore the very lives of the men and women concerned and the meaningfulness of those lives. And, without a return to an awareness and appreciation of those spiritual realities in the lives of law enforcement officers and other first responders is to impoverish and endanger the very souls of these dedicated individuals who have willingly placed themselves in harm's way to protect their fellow human beings. ♦



Endnotes

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On the Edge

Integrating Spirituality into Law Enforcement

By INEZ TUCK, Ph.D., M.B.A., M.Div.

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The phrase *on the edge* describes a way of living for many people in the helping professions who have chosen careers that place them in the midst of suffering. Whether they are nurses, physicians, or other health professionals who care for patients during trauma and major illnesses; pastoral counselors or faith representatives who minister to people at the end of life; social workers, psychologists, or other mental health

counselors who console the abused or the grief stricken; or law enforcement officers who provide a wide array of services to promote public safety, all work in difficult, demanding situations that expose them to recurring trauma. These professionals share a common desire to serve others and to “do good” while in the midst of human devastation and suffering.

Being on the edge indicates the tipping point where someone could potentially move

from a compassionate defender of basic human rights and dignity to a hardened, burned-out, and embittered individual. It may mean losing the capacity to view people as fellow human beings and only see the negative consequences of their actions or the harm they may subsequently cause. For those in the helping professions, such a perspective can potentially create a sense of despair that contributes to the onset of life-threatening illnesses and depression and may

result in homicide, suicide, or the need to self-medicate with alcohol, other drugs, or work to alleviate the stress.

If maintained over time, being on the edge can produce callous, unfeeling people whose lives are out of balance. For this reason, topics relative to healing and restoring the wounded spirits of helping professionals have become the foci of recent research. Responses to stress, such as compassion fatigue, spiritual distress, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), have emerged over the past decade as major health issues. No longer considered questionable diagnoses, these conditions have taken on greater significance as the mechanisms of stress and the resulting effect on health have become better understood.

THE STRESS RESPONSE

Stress is a definable physiological process that contributes to disease and discomfort.¹ Hans Selye proposed that the body's response to stress genetically evolved as a protective measure as humans learned to live in a threatening environment.² Whether caused by or resulting in pleasant or unpleasant conditions, stress is the body's response to any demand. Although usually associated with negative activities, stress also includes positive ones. For this reason, it is important to

differentiate the two types of stress. Negative stress generally refers to distress, whereas eustress reflects the responses to positive events. While both create the same physiological responses, eustress is thought to cause much less damage to the body than distress and suggests that "it's how you take it," or the appraisal of the event, that determines, ultimately, whether a person can adapt successfully to change in a positive or negative way.

Selye's research indicated that patients diagnosed with a variety of illnesses manifested many similar physical symptoms that he attributed to the physiological response of the body to stress.³ He noted that this pattern of symptoms could be explained by what he later defined as the general adaptation syndrome that consists of

three stages: the alarm reaction, the stage of resistance, and the stage of exhaustion.⁴ While all stages exist, most people typically do not experience the final one, the most severe level of stress that leads to exhaustion and possible death. Humans develop patterns of responses to stressors that provide a repertoire of adaptive behaviors. For this reason, they can acclimate easily to changes in their environment, relationships, and even emotions. This potential to adapt to stressors reveals itself when an initially alarming event becomes familiar and tolerable. People can endure a stressor for a brief period of time without untoward effects; however, with prolonged exposure to a situation or stimuli, their resistance breaks down and exhaustion sets in. Extending Selye's work, Fonder

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Throughout their careers, law enforcement officers experience chronic levels of high stress... that induce traumatic stress responses.

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proposed that individuals inherit a certain amount of adaptation energy, a term coined to denote the level of vigor necessary for coping with stress, determined by their genetic background.⁵ He stated that people can draw upon this thriftily over a long but uneventful existence or exhaust their supply in the course of a stressful, intense lifestyle. Law enforcement officers and other public servants who work in high-stress professions seem to require a constant supply of adaptation energy and, most of the time, can ably replenish their levels. However, when they cannot, they descend into a depleted state of burnout or compassion fatigue often with an embittered spirit. While an interesting theory, the idea of adaptive energy has little empirical evidence to support its existence. However, some individual variation does seem to occur in coping responses and human resilience.

THE RELATIONSHIP OF STRESS AND COPING

Lazarus and Folkman developed a theory of individual coping that can prove helpful for understanding the stress response.⁶ They posited that the way people perceive the nature and level of threat relates to how they shape their response. This research indicated that the appraisal of the stressful event is significant and that two

general coping strategies exist: problem solving and emotion focused.

Coping Strategies

People use problem solving when they can actively do something to alleviate stressful circumstances. On the other hand, they employ emotion-focused coping strategies to regulate the affective consequences of stressful or potentially stressful events. Research has indicated that people use

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Humans develop patterns of responses to stressors that provide a repertoire of adaptive behaviors.

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both approaches to combat most stressful incidents.⁷ The predominance of one type of strategy over another is determined, in part, by personal style (e.g., some people cope more actively than others) and also by the type of stressful event. Western society tends to support more action-oriented problem solving as the preferred coping style, generally expecting people to do something or take charge of a situation. Even some research findings have reinforced this

misconception about the existence of a preferred style by reporting that emotion-focused coping somehow relates to the onset of depression without adequate explanation of the cause.⁸

Later work made a distinction between active and avoidant coping strategies. Active ones are either behavioral or psychological responses designed to change the nature of the stressor itself or how a person thinks about it, whereas avoidant coping strategies lead people into activities, such as alcohol use, or mental states, such as withdrawal, that keep them from directly addressing stressful events. Generally speaking, active coping strategies, whether behavioral or emotional, seem to represent preferred ways of dealing with stressful events, and avoidant ones appear to constitute a psychological risk factor or marker leading to poor responses to stressful life events.⁹ Although the lack of observable activity is similar in both avoidant and emotion-focused coping, the two strategies have different intent, and the latter can resolve an unpleasant situation.

Cognitive Appraisal

As an evaluative process, appraisal helps individuals determine why they find a transaction stressful and what they should do to manage the

situation. In updating Lazarus and Folkman's theory, Park and Folkman added the category of meaning-focused coping as an option, along with religious coping.¹⁰ Meaning-focused coping results from positive reappraisal. People alter their perceptions of events to make them more congruent with their goals and beliefs, thereby resolving dissonance. Such change either renders the stressful experience benign or provides opportunities for growth. In contrast to the limiting nature of emotion-focused coping, subsequent research found that positive reappraisal and meaning making relates to a lower incidence of depression.¹¹

THE HOLISTIC APPROACH

Strong evidence supports the interaction of stress and mind-body variables. Over a number of years, Herbert Benson and colleagues at the Mind-Body Institute at Massachusetts General Hospital have documented the impact of religion, faith, and meditation on stress. These findings have supported the contention that practices inducing the relaxation response can help relieve hypertension, infertility, allergies, insomnia, headaches, and depression.¹² Studies have shown that mood changes and depression often accompany many of the stress-related illnesses, such

as diabetes, cardiovascular or gastrointestinal disorders, fibromyalgia, chronic fatigue syndrome, or neurological disturbances. Other studies have shown the relationship between stress and inflammatory ailments. People with pulmonary disease report a linkage of the physical condition with the high risk for suicide.¹³ Wachholtz and Pargament reported that stress increases cortisol levels, anaerobic cellular activity, heart rate, and hypertension.¹⁴

Unrecognized Diagnoses

Throughout their careers, law enforcement officers experience chronic levels of high stress accentuated by periodic

Table 1. Indications of Distress

Category	Symptoms
Physical	Headaches, chest pain, loss of sex drive, diarrhea or constipation, muscle tension, nausea or dizziness, weight gain or loss, frequent infections
Cognitive	Loss of memory, indecisiveness, inability to concentrate, poor judgment, negative thinking, anxious thoughts, constant worrying
Emotional	Moodiness or depression, agitation, restlessness, short temper, feeling on the edge or overwhelmed, loneliness, impatience, irritability
Behavioral	Unhealthy eating habits, addictions, disrupted sleep patterns, isolation and withdrawal, teeth grinding or jaw clenching, impulsivity, overreaction

Table 2. Description of Spiritual Distress

- Questions the meaning of life, death, and suffering
- Lacks sense of purpose, enthusiasm for life, feelings of joy, inner peace, or love
- Demonstrates discouragement or despair
- Feels a sense of spiritual emptiness
- Shows emotional detachment from self and others
- Experiences alienation from spiritual or religious community
- Exhibits or reports mood changes (frequent crying, depression, apathy, or anger)
- Displays sudden changes in spiritual practices (rejection, neglect, doubt, fanatical devotion, or increased interest)
- Questions credibility of religion or spiritual belief system
- Requests assistance for a disturbance in spiritual or religious beliefs

critical incidents that induce traumatic stress responses. If not appropriately managed, this stress can cause symptoms of PTSD; reactive personality change and substance abuse; physical illness and other comorbid conditions; and secondary life problems, including divorce, to develop.¹⁵ In addition, depression may be the result of the losses or threats engendered from working in situations of trauma.¹⁶ Tables 1 and 2 list the documented cognitive, emotional, physical, spiritual, and behavioral changes that represent the effects of prolonged stress. Law enforcement data have suggested that officers experience a high rate of homicides, suicides, and burnout as

the consequences of these stress responses.

While physical illnesses usually are diagnosed and treated, it remains unclear whether PTSD is diagnosed in members of the law enforcement profession. PTSD, classified as an anxiety disorder highly prevalent in the United States,¹⁷ may be a result of the stress experienced but ignored by officers because of the potential negative impact on their careers. Besides the immediate negative effects of PTSD on the functioning of sworn personnel, other changes have long-term consequences of equal importance. In addition, the author suggests that the diagnosis of spiritual distress usually is

not made in law enforcement officers. A diagnosis from the standardized diagnostic classification developed by the North America Nursing Diagnoses Association, spiritual distress is expressed as anger toward God or questioning the meaning of a person's suffering.¹⁸ Defined as "the impaired ability to experience and integrate meaning and purpose in life through a person's connectedness with self, others, art, music, literature, nature, or a power greater than oneself,"¹⁹ spiritual distress is the state in which a person or group experiences a disturbance in the belief or value system that usually provides strength, hope, and meaning to life. Both PTSD and spiritual distress may

be unrecognized diagnoses in law enforcement officers that require follow-up care.

Expanded Interventions

A body of psychosocial and physiological research has suggested that biobehavioral strategies, such as relaxation therapy, for stress management in chronic illnesses can mitigate psychological distress, improve coping skills, and enhance immune functions through neuroendocrine-immune system modulation. However, the positive effects of these interventions do not extend over time. Thus, it seems that mental or social changes are not sufficient for lasting effects.

These findings suggest that a two-dimensional model of mind-body interaction proves too limiting and that the integration of mind, body, and spirit into a holistic paradigm offers a better approach to understanding the effects of stress. The addition of spirituality to the holistic model supports emotion- and religion-focused coping and meaning making as ways of dealing with stress. The emphasis on internal processes required in emotion- and meaning-focused coping coincides with an understanding of the internal nature of spirituality. Also, as people age, they integrate the positive aspects of cognitive problem solving and

emotional coping more skillfully. Their ability to cope better is consistent with their moral growth and spiritual development.²⁰ Religious coping and meaning making are strategies that lead to the potential positive outcomes of spiritual growth and healing, representing the core of human existence.

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People use problem solving when they can actively do something to alleviate stressful circumstances.

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THE UNION OF SPIRITUALITY AND HEALTH

People often experience spirituality during the highs and lows of life, while on the mountaintops and in the valleys.²¹ Smucker stated, “Spirituality is an integrative energy that enhances well-being that involves all aspects of the mind, body, and spirit.”²² Some see spirituality as different from religion, and it is generally accepted that spirituality is more expansive. Malinski reported that spirituality is inclusive, whereas religion

is narrowed to organized faith systems, exclusive, and a mediated experience of the sacred, while spirituality is the direct experiencing of the sacred.²³

Defining Terms

Three definitions of spirituality can offer evidence of the rationale for including it in a holistic paradigm of health. First, spirituality is the essence of an individual and expressed in the outward manifestation of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that allows meaning making, peace, hope, and connectedness with self, others, nature, and God or a higher power.²⁴ A second definition comes from the content analysis of the meaning of spirituality expressed by a group of 27 healthy adults who included faith in God as part of their working interpretation. “Spirituality is a strongly held belief and a personal relationship with God that is integral to the life of an individual. There exists a connection with nature, others, and a higher power. Spirituality evolves a process that can be described as a journey, a guide, or a struggle.”²⁵ The final definition includes spiritual approaches, health outcomes, and the potential for growth possible when embracing spirituality. “Spirituality is the coexisting and transitional state of ‘being’ and ‘becoming’ in

relation to the emergent nature of interiority and connectivity. It is through efforts, such as self-reflection, meditation, and contemplation, that energy or life force is directed or transformed into manifestations of hope, peace, love, belongingness, generosity, and the inner strength necessary for physical, spiritual, and mental well-being. It creates meaning and purpose in the reality of one's existence, as well as expands potentialities and possibilities."²⁶

Studying Effects

In persons diagnosed with major illnesses, spirituality has contributed to positive wellness outcomes. Coleman and Holzemer reported that finding purpose and meaning was related to psychological well-being in clients living with HIV disease.²⁷ Fryback and Reinert stated that spirituality contributed to feelings of health and well-being and bridged hopelessness and meaningfulness.²⁸ Narayanasamy noted that when undergoing stress, people who had spiritual experiences became calmer and more tolerant; found more meaning in their lives; and were more concerned with issues of social justice, less materialistic, less status conscious, and less likely to be racially prejudiced.²⁹ Studies that included healthy participants also demonstrated similar results.³⁰

CONCLUSION

Over the past decade, spirituality has become a viable area of inquiry with well-designed qualitative and quantitative studies conducted by researchers from a variety of professional disciplines. They have examined spirituality directly or indirectly in college students,³¹ healthy adults,³² caregivers of persons diagnosed with schizophrenia,³³ parents of children diagnosed with cancer,³⁴ and family members of

***If maintained over time,
being on the edge
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homicide victims.³⁵ In addition, research has explored the role of spirituality in chronic and terminal illnesses, such as diabetes³⁶ and HIV/AIDS.³⁷ While only a few studies directly and specifically link spirituality and stress reduction, a growing body of related evidence supports the association of spirituality with positive states of hope and serenity, quality of life, general and spiritual well-being,

forgiveness, and physical health (e.g., reduction in hypertension, cardiac reactivity, and enhanced immune responses). By a logical extension of the current evidence, spirituality has implications for the health of those in the law enforcement profession.

The significance of spirituality for wellness and health cannot be dismissed or understated. Spirituality constitutes a critical component of the whole person that can and should be integrated into that individual's call to a vocation. After all, it is the "spirit [that] synthesizes the total personality and provides the sense of emerging direction and order."³⁸ ♦

Endnotes

¹ In a simplified description of the physiology of the stress response, the stress syndrome occurs when the hypothalamus (the bridge between the brain and endocrine system) sends a message to the pituitary gland (a hormone-producing gland embedded in bones at the base of the skull) to release ACTH (adrenocorticotrophic hormone) into the blood stream. This signal prompts the adrenal cortex (located above the kidneys) to create corticoids, another hormone, and disperse them in the body for use in the various stages of defense against a stressor. These physiological mechanisms account for the changes that allow the fight-or-flight response. J. Bremner, "The Effects of Stress on Brain Function," *Psychiatric Times* 20, no. 7 (2003): 18.

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How Spirituality Is Incorporated in Police Work A Qualitative Study

By Ginger Charles, Ph.D.

What is it that drives someone to become a law enforcement officer? Typically, people enter the profession with a strong desire to help others, find excitement, and discover who they are.¹ Relatively quickly, however, they realize that the “job” entails handling confrontations and crises, dealing with people who hate them for no specific reason, and feeling unappreciated for what they do. Many times, officers lose themselves in anger, succumb to the pressures on the street or with the police administration, or become bitter or cynical.² Those who completely lose faith and hope usually have their careers end in disease and self-destruction.³

However, most law enforcement officers are extremely resilient, demonstrating high levels of self-control, compassion, professionalism, and love for the work they have chosen. Their dedication to service can prove inspiring, revealing some of the noblest acts of self-sacrifice and altruism. These officers appear to have an ability to transform negative experiences, re-creating their emotionally charged frustrations into new meaning and compassion.⁴ The propensity to transcend negative experiences often can assist individuals move from feelings of victimization to viewing the experience as an opportunity for growth.⁵

The theme of spirituality remains relatively unexplored in law enforcement. In 1992, Kowalski and Collins conducted one of the major studies on faith and spirituality in the profession.⁶ Six officers told their stories about police work and their faith. While this study was not of rigorous design, it provided the first glimpse into police work and the topic of spirituality.

THE QUEST

The author conducted her exploratory research in 2004. She hoped to offer some insights into how spiritual practice affects law enforcement officers and their ability to police society, rather than focusing on how police work influences officers’ spirituality. In addition, the author wanted to learn whether officers could critically reflect on the trauma incurred in their work and then move toward finding meaning for destructiveness, pain, and suffering, thereby building a bridge toward compassion and peace.

Methods Used

Ten law enforcement officers from across the United States participated in the study. Each had a minimum of 5 years in the law enforcement culture, including significant exposure to traumatic events, human destructiveness, and suffering, and at least 5 years within a spiritual practice (e.g., prayer and meditation).

Defining spirituality to include all faiths and spiritual practices was important. Rothberg’s definition of spirituality as “involving doctrines and practices that help facilitate lived transformations of self and community toward fuller alignment with or expressions of what is ‘sacred’” proved

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Profile of Participants

Age	Sex	Marital Status	Title	Years of Service	Education
57	M	Married	Chief Investigator	33	B.A.
39	M	Married	Police Officer	14	B.S.
34	F	Single	Detective	9	M.A.
41	M	Married	Captain	23	B.S.
41	M	Married	Police Officer	7	B.S.
41	M	Married	Sergeant	18	B.A.
50	M	Married	Captain	27	B.A.
25	F	Single	Police Officer	5	A.A.
55	F	Single	Division Chief	32	M.A.
51	M	Married	Major	32	B.A.

appropriate.⁷ For the study, the author defined the term *spirituality* as what a person believes is sacred and how that individual aligns with that sacredness. The concept of spirituality included all spiritual paths, not only Christian perspectives.

The author used semistructured interviewing, designed to explore the expression of spirituality as revealed by the officers in their work. This particular method of narrative inquiry allowed the participants to “tell their stories.”⁸ The author asked the officers eight standardized, open-ended questions.

- 1) When did you become a law enforcement officer and why?
- 2) Tell me your spiritual history starting with your parents.
- 3) Describe your spiritual practice.
- 4) Tell me about your work as an officer.
- 5) Has your spirituality influenced your work as an officer?
- 6) What has been most challenging to you while working in a profession where you are constantly exposed to human destructiveness and suffering?

7) How have you changed as an officer?
How has your spirituality helped?

8) How do you cope with the human destructiveness and suffering encountered in police work? What is your support system when you are overwhelmed?

Additionally, the author probed beyond this formal set of questions to extract further insights and meaning from the participants. This approach provided a loose structure and an opportunity for the officers to tell their stories.

All interviews were recorded, transcribed, and then given to the officers to clarify or correct any discrepancies. Upon approval of the transcripts, the author examined and reviewed each interview to identify common themes that emerged. The presence of the actual voices of the officers as they described the phenomenon under investigation added strength to the study and highlighted the importance of including portions of their narratives to bring the research to life.

Results Found

The responses to the interview questions presented a living perspective from a group of law

enforcement officers about their relationship with spirituality, the world around them, their professional culture, and their growth. The three core themes—spiritual philosophies and practices, relationships creating humanistic approaches to service, and spiritual responses to human destructiveness—that emerged were distinct yet interwoven, demonstrating that spirituality penetrated all areas of the officers’ lives, and all were clearly important.

Spiritual Practices

All participants stated that their faith centered in Judeo-Christian beliefs and that prayer constituted their main form of spiritual practice. They believed that this was a private connection

with God, a personal conversation. One officer reflected, “I have the same prayer every night, and I’ve said it over and over. It’s just to help me do my best, to give thanks for what I have, thanks for my wife. When we would have a homicide during the day, I would go back to the house, park in front of it, and say a little prayer for the victim that I hope he or she is okay and in a better place.”⁹

Eight out of the 10 officers went to church regularly as another form of spiritual practice. Half also attended weekly Bible study, stating that it represented another way to experience a sense of community and a time to minister to others. One officer said, “Going to church is not just experiencing but it’s walking the talk. It’s taking what you’ve learned from the past, what you’ve read, or what God has shown you and living those lessons during the week.”¹⁰

Two officers discussed the importance of being in nature as a spiritual practice. One advised, “I just had this deep feeling or movement from the mountains. And, I still feel it. I love the high country. It just nourishes my soul.”¹¹ Another officer described his running as a meditative practice, “I can think about things. I reflect a lot. I truly just let my mind go. I look around and sense the beauty around me.”¹²

Human Relationships

The primary purpose of relationships for the officers included the necessity of being connected with other human beings, recognizing the humanness in all individuals, and realizing the opportunities for finding meaning in their work through compassion and integrity. One officer said, “Regardless if you’re a victim, witness, or suspect, you still are part of humanity, and you still have some basic rights as a human being.”¹³ Finally, for all of them, their spirituality provided the ability to acknowledge that there exists a larger plan as designed by God. They then could “surrender” to that plan, appreciating that they made a difference in their work, whether they knew it immediately.

Themes That Emerged	
Core theme	Spiritual philosophies and practices
Subthemes	Spiritual practices: prayer Spiritual calling to police work Spiritual ethics
Core theme	Relationships creating humanistic approach to service
Subthemes	Spiritual maturity in policing Compassionate service Coping in police culture
Core theme	Spiritual responses to experiences of human destructiveness
Subthemes	Experiences with human destructiveness and suffering Closeness to death Experiences of evil: God’s justice versus earthly justice

Spiritual Responses

The officers described maintaining a discipline of prayer as a way of connecting with God. This practice afforded each a “moral compass” to lead them beyond the pain and destructiveness encountered in police work. One officer offered his feelings about service, “What I love most about police work is seeing humanity at its core. I don’t consider any of that to be challenging. I consider all of that to be a gift. You can meet each person right where he or she is.”¹⁴ Another officer noted the importance of spiritual integrity, “I think the most important thing you bring to the job is your ethics and your character. I just think it’s in your heart, and you’ve got to have a moral compass that just always points in the right direction no matter how bad the seas are around you. The compass has got to be always true, and you either have it or you don’t. You’ve got to dedicate yourself to it, and you’ve got to have sound moral principles.”¹⁵

CONCLUSION

The author’s study explored how law enforcement officers incorporate spirituality in their work. The results suggested that spiritual beliefs are significant in assisting officers in their work, relationships, and health. Participating officers spoke clearly about how their spirituality has kept them from succumbing to the pressures of their work, especially in relation to the human destructiveness and suffering witnessed within their profession. However, these officers represent a very small percentage of the police culture across the United States, and, therefore, it is imperative to continue further research into spirituality as a resiliency factor in the law enforcement profession.

Little research existed with which to compare this study at the time it was conducted. Hence, as with any exploratory research, it generated more questions than answers. Consequently, further inquiry into the issue of how spirituality is incorporated in police work must be undertaken.

To do so can provide additional answers applicable to the wider perspective of police work and spiritual practice. It is the author’s hope that her study was not an anomaly, but, rather, a glimpse at an emerging police culture that embodies spiritual qualities, such as empathy, compassion, integrity, humanism, and love for all humankind. For all law enforcement officers throughout the world, along with the communities they have sworn to protect and serve, such hope must not remain in vain. ♦

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Brain Functioning as the Ground for Spiritual Experiences and Ethical Behavior

By FRED TRAVIS, Ph.D.



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While it seems uncommon to have the words *brain* and *spiritual experiences* in the same phrase, placing the terms *spirituality* and *law enforcement* together may appear even more so. The author contends, however, that brain functioning is fundamental to both spiritual experiences and the complex decisions that law enforcement officers must make every day. In addition, he explores how spiritual experiences can reverse

the negative impact of noxious ones on brain functioning and enhance individual well-being.

The brain transforms sensations of outer objects into perceptions and inner intentions into actions. We cannot see the mind think, but we can see the brain fire. Thus, brain patterns can serve as proxy variables for conscious functioning and can provide objective measures of growing subjectivity—even of spiritual experiences and ethical behavior.

Different tasks activate specific brain regions. If we imagine a semitruck in our mind's eye and then a postage stamp, we would see activation in the calcarine fissure, a deep fold in the visual system at the back of the brain. Larger items produce activation deeper in the fissure, whereas smaller ones create it closer to the surface.¹ Other brain areas are activated during esthetic judgments. When we look at sculptures, we usually pick the one that

corresponds to the golden mean as more pleasing. Associated with that judgment is greater activation in the left back (parietal) brain area.² In contrast, making an ethical judgment (e.g., Is it right to steal a loaf of bread to feed someone who is starving?) causes areas in the front of the brain to become active.³ The frontal area is the boss, or CEO, of the brain. Information from all brain areas converges on the front of the brain. Emotions, memories, unconscious processes, concrete perceptual experiences, intentions, and plans come together in frontal areas where the ongoing experience then is put into the larger context of past and future, right and wrong.

Frontal executive areas are responsible for planning, decision making, and judgment. At around age 12, connections of other parts of the brain with frontal areas begin to gain a fatty layer of myelin. This process continues through age 25. When output fibers are myelinated, information travels along them 20 times faster.⁴ The world of teenagers can offer an apt illustration. The brain areas for seeing the world (back sensory areas) and responding to it (motor areas) are fully myelinated. Connections with the frontal brain areas are not yet developed. Consequently, the output of sensory and motor

processing is done first, and the teenagers act before the input from the frontal areas can be added to their decisions. Thus, their world remains rooted in concrete experiences and is not placed in relation to consequences (past and future) or overall plans and values. Teenagers are like a car that has the accelerator intact but without the brakes installed.

EXPERIENCE CHANGES THE BRAIN

Experiences constantly tune the natural maturation of frontal areas. An experience flowing through the brain leaves its trace in the structure and function of the brain. When two cells fire together, they are wired together.⁵ For instance, violin players have larger cortical representations in the primary somatosensory cortex corresponding to the fingers of the hand that

forms the chords than the one that holds the bow.⁶ London taxicab drivers with more years of navigation experience have higher hippocampal gray matter volume, an area associated with spatial memory, than novices.⁷ The phantom-limb experience in amputees results from cortical reorganization following the loss of an arm or leg.⁸

What about law enforcement officers? How do their experiences affect the brain? At the start of their careers, they may have joined the police force to protect their community. They met similar farsighted individuals who functioned at high levels of thinking and displayed superior moral reasoning. Now, after weathering about 10 years of service, what might have happened? One veteran officer commented, "Peace officers are exposed to the worst that life has to offer.

Spiritual experiences occur at the silent recesses of the mind and, hence, compare with the depths of the ocean.



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[T]hey see the denizens of society at their very worst—when they have just been victimized or when they have just victimized someone else. Peace officers see the perpetrators of evil and the results of their evil deeds. The constant contact with evil is corrosive, and those effects are cumulative.”⁹

Experiences change the brain. This is inevitable. The violence law enforcement officers see becomes part of the functioning of their brains and bodies. Neural imaging assessed activation of the areas of the brain that stop wrong behavior, called orbitofrontal cortex, after individuals watched violent movies. Activation in the orbitofrontal cortex decreased as participants watched more and more violent movies.¹⁰ Bandura’s social learning research found that children who play violent video games act more hostile in play and allow more aggressive behavior toward friends.¹¹

Stress affects brain connections. Under stress, the brain downshifts to a more primitive response style, fight or flight, causing frontal executive brain areas to go off-line. Under stress, humans see the world and respond to it. Chronic stress—a small elevation of stress over a long time—and acute stressors, such as the death of a spouse, produce

lasting change on brain functioning. High stress causes brain regions involved in memory and emotions, such as the hippocampus,¹² amygdala, and prefrontal cortex, to undergo structural remodeling, thereby impairing memory and increasing anxiety¹³ and aggression.¹⁴ This can lead to officers becoming distant from spouses, children, other family members, and friends because they are too drained to give to anyone else.¹⁵

“

The brain transforms sensations of outer objects into perceptions and inner intentions into actions.

”

Neural imaging of individuals who have been under extensive stress or abused alcohol or other drugs has revealed functional lesions in their frontal executive areas.¹⁶ Although intact, the brain matter is not involved in planning and decision making.

Stressful experiences reduce connections with frontal executive areas of the brain and amplify stimulus-response circuits. To balance these negative, stressful experiences, people

need fundamentally different ones.

WHOLENESS BALANCES EXPERIENCES

The author defines spiritual experiences as those of wholeness—those of our universal nature, or that part of us not tied to time, space, or our individual body or personality. Moreover, they are not confined to religious practices. To help explain this concept, the author models the mind as an ocean with constantly changing waves at the surface and silence at the depths. Thoughts and sentiments, picked up at the periphery of the mind, are analogous to the changing waves and represent the level of ordinary experiences. Intuition or vague feelings are received at more subtle levels of the mind and correspond to the ocean’s middle regions. Spiritual experiences occur at the silent recesses of the mind and, hence, compare with the depths of the ocean. This silent interiority of the mind has been called pure consciousness.¹⁷ The adjective *pure* emphasizes it as wholly, or purely, an experience of wakefulness, self-awareness, or consciousness. Self-awareness continues, even though bodily sensations, sensory perceptions, thoughts, and feelings are absent.

Spiritual experiences activate widespread brain areas and are reflected in higher brain-wave coherence,¹⁸ a mathematical calculation of the degree of similarity of electrical activity between two areas on the scalp. Brain areas showing similar patterns of electrical activity are considered structurally or functionally related.¹⁹

Peak experiences investigated by Maslow fit into this category of spiritual experiences that happen spontaneously in many individuals and transform their worldview.²⁰ People become more self-reliant, self-sufficient, independent, and take responsibility for their lives and performance, rather than relying on others. Such experiences occur across cultures. But, because they transpire spontaneously, measuring the associated brain and bodily functioning of these experiences can prove difficult. The author's facility, however, has measured spiritual experiences during Transcendental Meditation (TM) practice. In terms of the analogy of the mind as an ocean, TM practice takes attention from the active surface-thinking level of the mind to its silent depths, pure consciousness devoid of mental content.²¹ An analysis of pure consciousness experiences revealed three themes that characterized that state: the absence of

time, space, and body sense with an expanded sense of self-awareness.²² This intrinsic state emerges in awareness when thought activity settles down. Brain patterns during pure consciousness could suggest how spiritual experiences may change them and, in turn, help reverse the toxic effects of stress and negativity.

TM CHANGES BRAIN PATTERNS

Along with others, the author has conducted research on brain patterns and pure consciousness experiences during TM practice.²³ From their empirically identified measures, they generated a Brain Integration Scale (BIS).²⁴ The scores of the participants in the research positively correlated with emotional stability,

moral reasoning, and inner directedness and negatively correlated with anxiety.²⁵

Interestingly, individuals with more years of meditation practice had higher BIS scores, a finding that led to two questions. First, do spiritual experiences during TM practice increase BIS scores, or are people with higher BIS scores more likely to learn and continue TM practice? Second, is the BIS just a "meditation" measure, or are the scores related to outer success? Research suggested that TM practice increased BIS scores in college students. Also, two studies reported that top-level athletes and managers had higher BIS scores.

College Students

Fourteen students were assessed four times over their



first year of TM practice: first at baseline and then after 2, 6, and 12 months of TM practice.²⁶ Findings suggested that the state gained during TM practice can be achieved successfully after only a few months and that meditation practice has useful benefits for daily life. These data emphasize the point that spiritual experiences have real, practical effects on the functioning of an individual's mind and body.

Another group of 38 college students participated in a randomized controlled trial investigating effects of TM practice on BIS scores, stimulus response to loud tones, and sleepiness. After pretest, students were randomly assigned to learn TM immediately or following the posttest. At posttest, the TM group had significantly higher BIS scores, less incidence of sleepiness during the day, and faster habituation rates (i.e., they were less jumpy and reactive).²⁷

College is a time of great challenge. The academic, financial, and social demands can prove highly stressful.²⁸ TM practice buffered effects of high stress: BIS scores increased, sleepiness decreased, and sympathetic reactivity was lower.

World-Class Athletes

Done in collaboration with the National Olympic Training Center in Norway and the Norwegian University for Sports

Sciences, the first study involved 33 professional athletes who met the criteria of placing among the 10 best performers in major competitions (e.g., Olympic Games, World Championships, or World Cup) for at least 3 seasons, being active on the top level within the past 5 years, and reaching the age of at least 25. A control group of 33 other athletes who had been active in training and competition at the senior level



for at least 3 seasons but did not consistently place among the top 50 percent in the Norwegian Championships also participated in this study. These subjects were matched with the world-class group by age, gender, and type of sport.

The two groups of athletes differed significantly in level of competitive performance and also in physiological and psychological measures. The

world-class performers had higher BIS scores, faster habituation rates to a loud tone, and elevated results on measures of self-development and moral reasoning.²⁹

Top-Level Managers

This second study involved 20 top-level Norwegian managers from the private and public sectors who demonstrated excellence in management performance as evidenced by expanding their business many times or turning around failing businesses and had a reputation for being socially responsible, having sound ethics, and displaying a more human orientation in business. A comparison group consisted of 20 people employed at lower and middle levels in organizations. These individuals were matched with the top-level group by gender and type of organization (competitive/noncompetitive).

As with world-class athletes, top-performing managers exhibited higher BIS scores and increased levels of moral reasoning. These results indicated more integrated functioning of the brain's frontal executive centers, the CEO of the brain.³⁰ Frontal integration provides a coherent framework to unite localized processes into a larger picture. It allows the person to rise above the demands of the moment and include more expanded concepts in making

decisions—for instance, the impact of actions on society, rather than only on the individual's needs.

Law Enforcement Officers

The author's research has indicated that TM practice leads to increased frontal brain integration, faster habituation to stressful stimuli, and higher moral reasoning. Spiritual experiences enliven frontal coherence, which builds global circuits to place individual experiences in a larger framework. In this vein, spiritual experiences could provide the inner armor to protect law enforcement officers from the noxious effects of negative experiences and stress.

Research specific to the law enforcement profession has revealed the importance of spirituality to its members.³¹ Additional studies should be undertaken to help officers remain effective in their work and thrive as human beings throughout their careers.

CONCLUSION

The brain is the interface between human beings and their world. Brain functioning changes sensations into perceptions and thoughts into actions. Reverberations in brain circuits lead to conscious experience; these reverberations also structurally alter the brain. Stressful experiences change brain

regions involved in memory and emotions, impairing memory and increasing anxiety and aggression. Spiritual experiences modify frontal executive regions, wherein these areas become more coherent leading to more effective thinking and planning. Higher frontal coherence is correlated with higher moral reasoning, greater emotional stability, and decreased anxiety. Spiritual experiences enliven executive brain circuits to buffer the impact of noxious experiences and, therefore, could contribute to higher well-being. ♦

***An experience
flowing through the
brain leaves its trace
in the structure
and function of
the brain.***

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The violence law enforcement officers see becomes part of the functioning of their brains and bodies.

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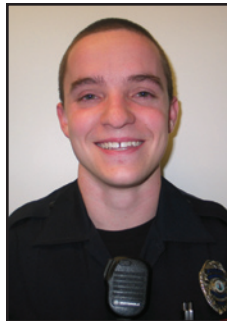
The Bulletin Notes

Law enforcement officers are challenged daily in the performance of their duties; they face each challenge freely and unselfishly while answering the call to duty. In certain instances, their actions warrant special attention from their respective departments. The *Bulletin* also wants to recognize those situations that transcend the normal rigors of the law enforcement profession.

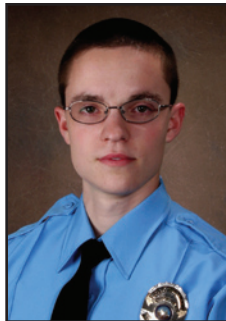


Sergeant Simpson

Sergeant Thomas Simpson of the Newport, Oregon, Police Department was on patrol in a bay area when he heard someone yelling. He could not immediately identify the origin of the voice or the person's words, so he parked his patrol car and searched the area around a dock. Sergeant Simpson, along with two other deputies, located a middle-aged male calling for help while clinging to a mooring line tied to the dock. Immediately, Sergeant Simpson and another deputy leaned over the edge of the dock and pulled the shivering, stuttering victim from the frigid water. Sergeant Simpson then provided aid until medical personnel arrived. The man, who almost drowned after being in the cold water for about 20 minutes, survived the incident.



Officer Brandon Bowman



Officer Justin Bowman

Twin brothers from neighboring agencies, Officer Brandon Bowman of the Virginia Beach, Virginia, Police Department and Officer Justin Bowman of the Chesapeake, Virginia, Police Department, were meeting at the border of the two cities when both received radio dispatches concerning a possible injured person at a nearby intersection. Both immediately responded to the scene and found an off-duty nurse and another citizen rendering first aid to an unresponsive male jogger. Officer Brandon Bowman retrieved an automatic electronic defibrillator (AED) from his vehicle and handled the operation of the device. Officer Justin Bowman provided the nurse with an oral mask and assisted with CPR. After a few minutes, the man's breathing and pulse strengthened. Ultimately, the victim survived.

Wanted: Bulletin Notes

The *FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin* seeks nominations for the **Bulletin Notes**. Nominations should be based on either the rescue of one or more citizens or arrest(s) made at unusual risk to an officer's safety. Submissions should include a short write-up (maximum of 250 words), a separate photograph of each nominee, and a letter from the department's ranking officer endorsing the nomination. Submissions should be sent to the Editor, *FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin*, FBI Academy, Law Enforcement Communication Unit, Hall of Honor, Quantico, VA 22135.

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